

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 13, 14, 16 and 17 contain allowable subject matter.

III. The Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects claims 12, 15 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Japanese Patent Publication No. 2002-289604 to Sakagami et al. (Sakagami) over PCT Publication No. WO 2004/026765 to Kohmura et al. (Kohmura). This rejection is rendered moot.

Kohmura is a PCT application filed on September 8, 2003. However, Kohmura was not published until April 1, 2004. Also, Kohmura was published in the Japanese language, not in English. Thus, the reference date for Kohmura is April 1, 2004.

On the other hand, the present application claims priority to JP2004-073600, which discloses the subject matter of claims 12-18. JP2004-073600 was filed on March 15, 2004 which is before the Kohmura reference date. A certified English-language translation of JP2004-073600 is filed to perfect the claim for foreign priority to disqualify Kohmura as a prior art reference. Thus, the rejection over Kohmura is improper.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:

Certified English-Language Translation JP2004-073600

Date: September 23, 2009

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